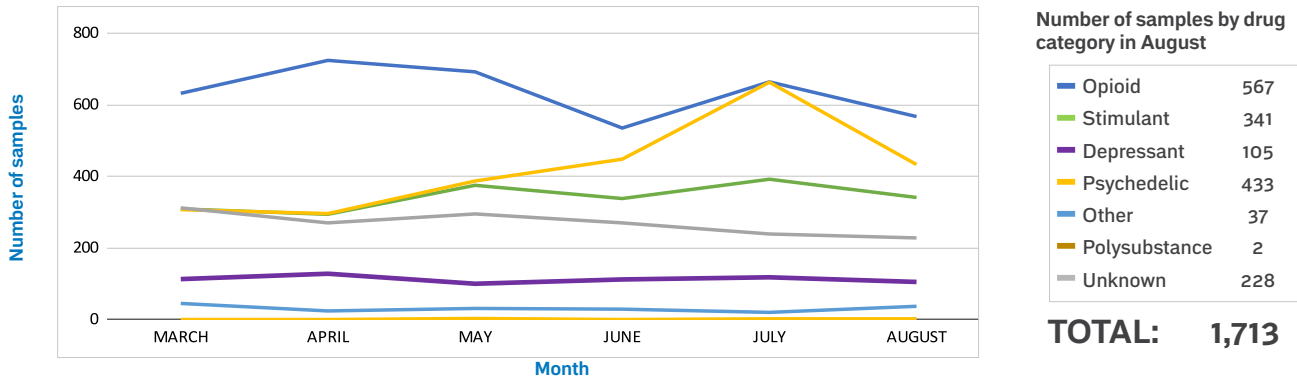


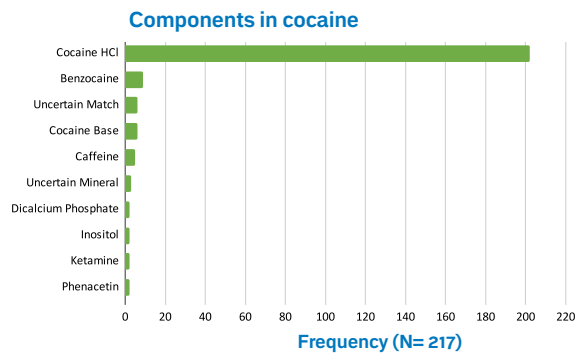
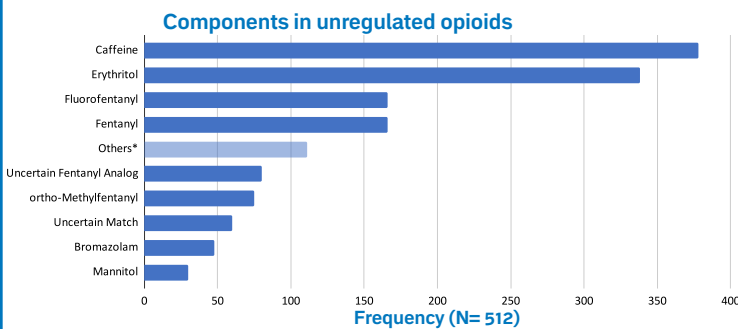
Key Findings

- In August, a total of 1,713 drug checks were performed across the Vancouver Coastal Health region (8 access points).
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines by FTIR and/or test strip increased to 34.6% (196 of 567 samples). The true rate may be higher as benzo-like substances such as etizolam are not reliably detected by benzodiazepine test strips.
- Benzodiazepines were detected by FTIR in 10.7% of unregulated opioids (55 of 512 samples), indicating their presence in higher concentrations.
- Fluorofentanyl vs. fentanyl detection by FTIR in unregulated opioids was on par in August for the first time (32.4%, 166 of 512 samples each). Ortho-Methylfentanyl was detected in 14.6% of unregulated opioids (75 samples).
- Xylazine was detected by FTIR in 0.4% of unregulated opioids (2 of 512 samples).
- There has been an increase in the number of opioid samples containing medetomidine, an animal tranquilizer more potent than xylazine, as found by confirmatory testing partners. Two alerts in the VCH region were issued in August concerning these findings.
- To find drug checking services near you, please see our [site locator](#)

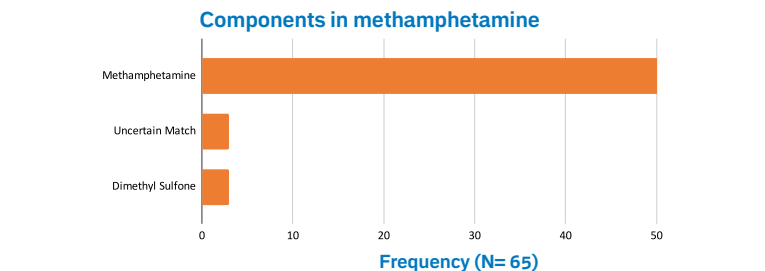
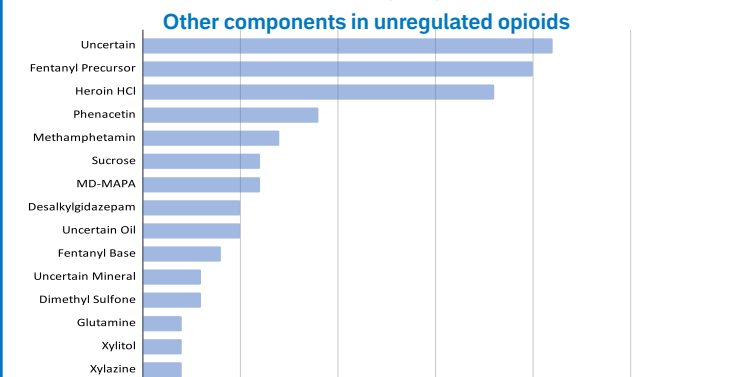
Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



Components found in drug samples in July

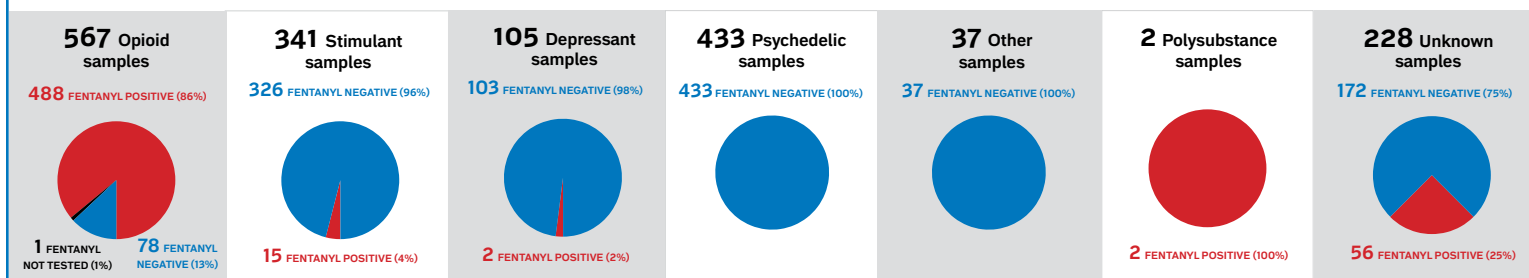


Additional compounds that were detected a single time each have been excluded from this graph, which include: lactose, mannitol, methamphetamine, flubromazepam, creatine, uncertain oil.



Additional compounds that were detected a single time each have been excluded from this graph, which include: caffeine, cocaine HCl, MDMA, phenacetin, uncertain mineral.

Number of samples tested with fentanyl present



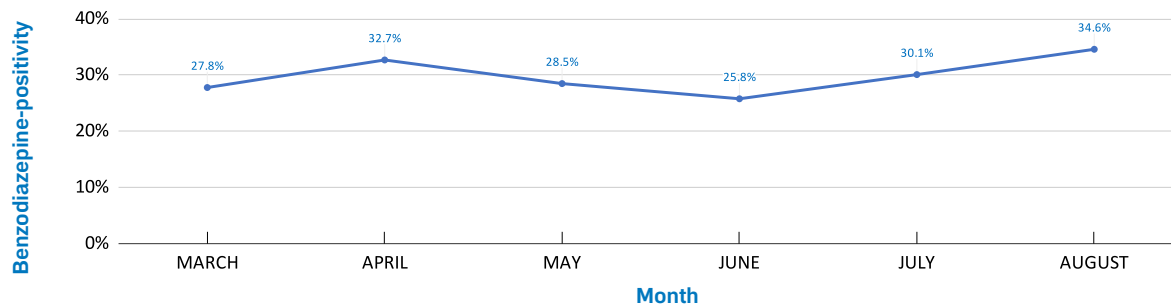
PUBLIC HEALTH NOTIFICATIONS

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
August 5, 2024 Vancouver	Fentanyl	Bromazolam	Positive	Positive	Light brown powder sold as fentanyl in Vancouver contains primarily bromazolam, a benzo analog. Sample also tested positive for fentanyl or a fentanyl analog.
August 7, 2024 qathet (Powell River)	Crack Cocaine	Caffeine, Cocaine Base, Fentanyl, Phenacetin	Positive	Negative	Brown granules sold as crack cocaine in qathet (Powell River) tested positive for crack cocaine and fentanyl.
August 9, 2024 Vancouver	Down + Benzodiazepines	Erythritol, Caffeine, Fentanyl, Xylazine, Bromazolam	Positive	Positive	Brown granules sold in Vancouver and expected to be down with benzos tested positive for fentanyl, xylazine, and bromazolam, a benzo analog. Substance has caused OD.
August 14, 2024 qathet (Powell River)	Down	Fentanyl, Medetomidine*	Positive	Negative	Multiple samples (brown pastet, beige pebbles) sold as down in the qathet region (Powell River) tested positive for fentanyl and medetomidine, a veterinary sedative more toxic than xylazine.*
August 15, 2024 Vancouver	Cocaine	Flubromazepam	Negative	Positive	White powder expected to be cocaine tested in Vancouver was positive for the benzodiazepine flubromazepam, and negative for cocaine.
August 15, 2024 Vancouver	Down	Sodium Dodecyl Sulfate	Negative	Negative	Light blue gel with dark blue specks sold as down in the DTES of Vancouver tested positive for sodium dodecyl sulfate and negative for fentanyl and other opioids. Sodium dodecyl sulfate is a common ingredient in detergents and household cleaning products and is not intended for consumption.
August 21, 2024 Vancouver	Down	Fentanyl, Medetomidine*	Positive	Negative	Multiple samples (blue chunks, purple chunks, brown chunks, white chunks, red pebbles, pink granules) sold as down in the DTES of Vancouver tested positive for fentanyl and medetomidine, a veterinary sedative more toxic than xylazine.
August 21, 2024 Vancouver	Acetaminophen + Oxycodone (Percocet)	Microcrystalline Cellulose, Uncertain Oil, Uncertain Match	Positive	Negative	White pressed pills sold as Percocet (oxycodone and acetaminophen) in Vancouver tested positive for fentanyl and negative for oxycodone and acetaminophen.
August 22, 2024 Vancouver	Crack Cocaine	Cocaine Base, Xylazine	Negative	Negative	Grey granules sold as crack cocaine in Vancouver tested positive for cocaine and xylazine.
August 29, 2024 Vancouver	Alprazolam (Xanax)	Microcrystalline Cellulose, Uncertain Oil, Xylazine	Negative	Positive	White pressed pill with imprints "XANAX" and "2" sold as alprazolam in Vancouver tested positive for xylazine.

*Results provided by complementary testing partner Substance using Paper Spray Mass Spectrometry, all other spectrometry results are determined by FTIR.

Health authorities and community organizations issue further toxic drug alerts from sources other than drug checking. See their respective websites or social media accounts for more alerts.

Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines in the past 6 months



During the month of August, **34.6%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines using test strips in our partner sites in Vancouver Coastal Health (**196 samples of 567 checked**). Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. The results presented here are derived from both of these technologies and are presumptive until confirmed by a laboratory.

Number of drugs checks at each site

Location	# of Drugs Checked
Get Your Drugs Tested (Vancouver)	1361
Insite (Vancouver)	248
LIFT Community Services (Powell River)	75
WCSS (Squamish)	20
WCSS (Whistler)	5
Total:	1713

Less than 5 samples were tested at the following location, which is included in the total: Tla'amin Nation (Powell River)

Number of samples with expected drug present

using FTIR/test strip drug checking

EXPECTED DRUG	Present	Not Present	Presence Not Determined	Samples Tested
Opioid	532	29	6	567
Stimulant	318	20	3	341
Depressant	77	27	1	105
Psychedelic	395	22	16	433
Other	20	7	10	37
Polysubstance	2	0	0	2
Unknown	0	0	228	228
Total	1344	105	264	1713

Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents

Depressant include:
benzodiazepines, etizolam,
GHB, hypnotics

Opioid include:
"down", heroin, fentanyl
(unregulated opioids), and
pharmaceutical opioids

Polysubstance includes:
cross-category mixtures







Psychedelic include:
MDMA and related,
2C-family, tryptamines,
ketamine, LSD

Stimulant include:
methamphetamine, "speed,"
cocaine and crack cocaine,
cathinones

Unknown includes:
samples where the individual
was unable to identify an
expected substance - this
includes found samples.

Number of opioid samples with expected drug present

using FTIR/test strip drug checking

EXPECTED DRUG	Present	Not Present	Presence Not Determined	Samples Tested
Fentanyl 	118	1	0	119
Heroin 	8	5	0	13
Down 	369	11	0	380
Pharmaceutical 	27	11	6	44
Opium 	10	1	0	11
Total 	532	29	6	567

Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents. 'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

Data represented here are collected from our partner sites across the province. Drug samples are tested using the Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectrometer in combination with fentanyl test strips and benzodiazepine test strips.

There is 5% fentanyl detection limit on the FTIR spectrometer (McCrae, 2019), and a drug check on any given sample consists of both the FTIR and BTNX fentanyl immunoassay test strip testing done in combination. When applicable, BTNX benzodiazepine immunoassay test strips are also used.

BCCSU gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following partners:

